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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, February 10, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE LITTLE RED PURPLE STAMP". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today, I'm bringing you a message about the "little purple stamp", something we see so often that we take it very much for granted. I mean of course the little round purple stamp on the meats we buy in the butcher shop-- the circle of purple ink with some abbreviated words inside it that stands for "United States inspected and passed."

The Federal people who put this stamp on meats say homemakers are surprised when they find out just how thoroughly the meat is inspected. The inspectors begin their work when the animals are still alive. But the Government starts its work a long time before that--work to insure us that the meat we buy is clean, wholesome, and in keeping with American standards.

The Government starts by making sure that the place where meat is slaughtered is clean. So the meat inspection service has its architects and sanitary engineers to check up on building plans. They see to it that the plumbing and the light, and the ventilation in the buildings are exactly what they should be. Of course they demand such things as loads of scalding-hot water under pressure, and plenty of places to sterilize instruments.

Now, with the plant in good order, clean, and up-to-date, we can go on with the inspection of the live animals. A graduate veterinarian is always on hand to look over the animals when the work begins. If he sees even one pig or one cow that behaves the least bit queerly, that one animal is slaughtered separately from the rest.

Next, the inspectors watch the slaughtering, and then they examine every part of every carcass carefully. They especially scrutinize the parts where diseases are most likely to show up first.

Then if the inspectors find any indication of disease or anything that is at all objectionable in any part, they hold the entire carcass for a special inspection by itself.

So you see every piece of meat is checked at least twice, sometimes several times. And the little purple stamp goes only on the meat that passes all these tests.

Right now, I imagine some of you want to ask questions. You may want to know what becomes of the meat that is condemned because it isn't fit to eat. Some may want to know whether the Government inspects all meats. Others may be asking if canned meats are inspected like the others. And some others may want to know if it's all right to eat the purple stamp.



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I'll answer these questions one at a time. First, about the condemned meat. Absolutely every bit of it is destroyed or ruined for food purposes in some way. It is part of the inspector's work to see that this is done.

Next, as to how much meat is inspected by the Government. About 2 out of every 3 animals slaughtered for food are Federally inspected, according to official estimates.

The law requires that every meat establishment that cans meat, or that ships any part of its output across state lines must have Federal meat inspection. Of course the Government does not inspect every animal that every farmer slaughters on his own farm. And they don't inspect meat that is slaughtered and sold inside the boundaries of any one State.

But several States and many cities have their own systems of inspection. And some of these systems are patterned after the national service.

And now about the meat that goes into cans. I think I've already given a part of the answer to this question. Every bit of the meat that goes into cans is inspected. But that's only a start on what the meat inspectors do for canned meats. They inspect everything else that goes into the can besides the meat. They make sure that any spices used are pure, and they even put the water through a chemistry test and examine it under a microscope.

And that isn't all. They tell the meat canneries folks what they can put on the outside of the can, as well as in the inside. The label must tell exactly what is inside the can. Even the pictures must give the right impression.

And last about the purple coloring matter in the stamp. It is perfectly harmless. This same coloring fluid has been used for 33 years.

Some homemakers trim the purple mark off. That is all right if it doesn't happen to make a hole in the nice covering of fat on top of a roast of beef or a leg of lamb. But if you take a big piece out of that cover of fat on top of your roast, you cut down cooking time and let out juice.

For my own part, it gives me a feeling of confidence whenever I see this purple stamp on a piece of meat. I know it's clean and wholesome and has been inspected and passed by a representative of the United States Government.

That's all I have time for on meat inspection today.

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